

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1417

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 1733

E.O. 11652: GDS 1-4

TAGS: PGOV,PFOR,MARR, AV, MH,VI

SUBJ: A GOLDEN HANDSHAKE FOR BRITISH COLONIES IN THE
CARIBBEAN?

1. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION, A BRITISH DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HMG WILL PROBABLY OFFER
MONTSEERRAT AND THE BVI A LUMP-SOM CASH SETTLEMENT ON CONDITION
THAT THE TWO COLONIES WILL OPT FOR FULL INDEPENDENCE. ACCORD-
ING TO THE OFFICIAL, THE PAYMENTS UNDER CONSIDERATION ARE AP-
PROXIMATELY TEN TIMES THE ANNUAL COST OF EACH COLONY'S CURRENT
DRAIN ON THE EXCHEQUER. IN RETURN, THE BRITISH WOULD WANT, IN
ADDITION TO THE SEVERANCE OF POLITICAL TIES, A STATEMENT FROM
THE GOVTS INVOLVED THAT THEY UNDERSTAND NO FURTHER BRITISH
AID WILL BE OFFERED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. THE OFFICIAL DESCRIBED ANGUILLA AS A SEPARATE CASE, WITH
THE PROPOSED DOG ISLAND RENTAL PAYMENTS PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FOR THAT ISLAND'S INDEPENDENCE.

3. NO MENTION SHOULD BE MADE OF A BRIDGETOWN-BASED BRITISH
OFFICIAL AS THE SOURCE OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION.

4. COMMENT: THE OFFICIAL IN QUESTION MAY OR MAY NOT KNOW
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WHAT HMG'S INTENTIONS ARE; HOWEVER, HE IS FAIRLY SENIOR AND

HAS PROVIDED RELIABLE INFORMATION IN THE PAST. IN ANY EVENT, IT HAS LONG BEEN EVIDENT TO US THAT THE BRITISH WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SHED THEIR COLONIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE AREA, AND IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY WOULD TRY TO DO SO, EVEN WHEN THERE IS LITTLE OR NO LOCAL SENTIMENT FOR INDEPENDENCE. (OFFICIALS IN BOTH MONTSERRAT AND THE BVI HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO US THAT THEY HAVE NO DESIRE TO CHANGE THEIR COLONIAL STATUS, AND THE ACTIONS OF THE GOVT AND PEOPLE OF ANGUILLA SINCE 1967 HAVE CLEARLY BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSER TIES WITH THE UK.)

END COMMENT.
BRITTON

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